



News from **SALEM COUNTY**

Office of Public Information

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SALEM COUNTY RANKED NUMBER TWO IN NEW STATEWIDE TOURISM GROWTH REPORT

County Sees Increase Of \$14.6 Million in 2010 Tourism Revenue

(Salem County, NJ)-- Salem County posted the second highest rate of statewide tourism growth in 2010 according to a new Economic Impact Study released by the New Jersey Department of Tourism. The County's growth rate of 5.84% far exceeded the average statewide increase of .84%, and bettered the performance of tourism powerhouses Cape May County and Atlantic County.

The New Jersey Tourism Economic Impact Study, conducted by Vantage Strategy, Inc., reaffirmed the critical importance of the tourism industry in New Jersey. Core tourism, defined by industries providing direct services to visitors, maintained its standing as the state's third largest industry. In fact, tourism-related activity generated \$7.2 billion in federal, state, and local government revenue in 2010.

"All of our internal survey data was telling us that the *Discover The Possibilities* advertising campaign was having a positive impact, but this news is much more than we could have hoped for," said Freeholder Director Lee Ware. "The 5.84% growth rate translates to an increase in tourism expenditures of \$14.6 million at County venues, attractions, hotels, restaurants, farm markets, gas stations, and retail and specialty shops. This is a fantastic return on investment for County taxpayers as every dollar of tourism advertising generated \$119 of incremental spending. It is now clear that our message is attracting a regional audience that is willing to spend their tourism dollars in Salem County."

"When you take into account that at the beginning of our coordinated marketing effort in 2008 Salem County's tourism sector was actually shrinking at a rate of 2.6%, our actual growth is nearly 8.5%," said Freeholder Beth Timberman, Chairperson of the Transportation, Tourism, and Agriculture Committee. "Considering this growth was accomplished during a deep recession that impacted every industry in the United States, including travel and tourism, the results are even more impressive. Providing adequate funding to entice more visitors to Salem County represents a major opportunity, both to



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stimulate the economy and to take market share from competitors who fail to recognize the wisdom of investing in their tourism assets."

"However, even with these positive results we understand that some people will still have a difficult time believing tourism is a viable industry for Salem County," Timberman continued. "But it is economic development in the purest sense. It's a good investment for the County to make, because it generates revenue through direct sales, secondary economic activity, and increased tax receipts, at little or no impact to our quality of life."

"The report's findings confirm that our strategy of building alliances, creating collaborative ventures, and aggressively and professionally marketing our tourism brand has enabled Salem County to achieve a dramatic turnaround in a very short period of time," Ware continued. "On behalf of the Board of Chosen Freeholders, I want to recognize our County staff, the citizen volunteers of the Tourism Advisory Council, and our marketing and advertising agency Lee Tofanelli and Associates, Inc. for a job well done. We have a great team working for Salem County."

According to Timberman, the Department of Tourism and the Tourism Advisory Council, in consultation with the Chamber of Commerce and other County organizations, are developing new ideas and programs which can help leverage marketing dollars, create efficiencies, and deliver a broader impact to the overall goals and efforts of the campaign. "For example, we are providing County businesses and attractions with monthly hospitality tips focused on understanding and determining customer needs, and ways to positively influence consumer buying behavior. In addition, we are developing a free discount coupon program for County businesses which will be promoted to potential visitors as part of our regional advertising campaign. We will also soon launch a new tourism blog which will allow residents to become active participants in promoting Salem County."

"Clearly, those involved in Salem County's tourist sector still face many challenges in an extremely competitive marketplace. However, I am confident that the *Discover The Possibilities* campaign is positioning the County as a competitive and appealing destination, and that our residents and businesses are getting their money's worth for the comparatively limited marketing dollars we are spending," Ware concluded.